Parent Engagement -Teacher Practice

Goal: Establish **consistent two-way communication** between teachers and families to foster collaboration, support learning, and build trust.

Key Considerations

- **Accessibility:** Ensure all communication tools and materials are accessible to all families, including those with limited technology or language barriers. (Mapp, K. L., 2003. *Having Their Say*, *The School Community Journal*.)
- **Consistency:** Maintain regular and predictable communication patterns. Note: Don't overwhelm or inundate parents with too much information.
- **Clarity:** Use clear and concise language, avoiding educational jargon.
- **Positive Tone:** Focus on celebrating successes and framing challenges constructively.
- **Two-Way Communication:** Emphasize the importance of listening to parent perspectives and responding to their concerns. Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler 1997, *Review of Educational Research*.

Communicate

Digital Platform: Choose a platform that allows for messaging, announcements, and file sharing. Examples include ClassDojo, Bloomz, Seesaw, or Google Classroom.

- **How it facilitates two-way communication:**
  - Direct messaging between teacher and parents
  - Parents can comment on student work or announcements
  - Ability for parents to easily share information with the teacher
- **Email:** Use for formal communication, newsletters, and updates.
  - **Facilitates two-way communication:**

- ■ Parents can reply with questions or concerns
- ■ Allows for more detailed information sharing
- **Text Messaging:** Utilize a service that allows for group messaging while maintaining privacy (Remind, Bloomz).
  - ○ **How it facilitates two-way communication:**
    - ■ Quick updates and reminders
    - ■ Parents can quickly respond to questions or requests
- **Phone Calls:** Reserve for sensitive matters or when a more personal conversation is needed.
  - ○ **Facilitates two-way communication:**
    - ■ Allows for real-time discussion and clarification
    - ■ Builds rapport and trust

Strategies

- **Regular Updates:**
  - ○ **Weekly Newsletter:** Share key highlights, upcoming events, and learning topics.
  - ○ **Digital Platform Updates:** Post photos and short descriptions of classroom activities.
  - ○ **Individual Student Updates:** Provide personalized feedback and progress reports through the digital platform or email.
- **Opportunities for Interaction:**
  - ○ **Online Discussion Forums:** Pose questions related to classroom learning on the digital platform to encourage parent participation.
  - ○ **Virtual Office Hours:** Schedule regular times for parents to connect with you online or by phone.
  - ○ **Parent Workshops:** Offer workshops on relevant topics like supporting learning at home, digital citizenship, or social-emotional development.
- **Solicit Feedback:**

- ○ **Surveys:** Use online tools (Google Forms, SurveyMonkey) to gather feedback on communication preferences, curriculum, or classroom activities.
- ○ **Suggestion Box (physical or digital):** Encourage parents to share ideas and suggestions.
- ○ **Parent-Teacher Conferences:** Dedicate time for two-way conversations about student progress and goals.

Building Relationships

- **Welcome Activities:** At the start of the year, send a welcome letter or video introducing yourself and your communication plan.
- **Personal Touches:** Acknowledge birthdays, share positive anecdotes about students, and show genuine interest in their lives.
- **Culturally Responsive Communication:** Be mindful of language barriers and cultural differences. Provide translated materials and seek to understand diverse perspectives. (Ferlazzo, L. 2011. *Engaging Parents in School*, Scholastic)

Timeline

- **Beginning of Year:** Introduce communication plan, establish digital platform, send welcome letter.
- **Ongoing:** Weekly updates, regular use of chosen communication tools, consistent interaction with parents.
- **Periodically:** Conduct surveys, host parent workshops, hold parent-teacher conferences.

Evaluation

- **Track Parent Participation:** Monitor platform usage, survey responses, and attendance at events.
- **Solicit Feedback:** Regularly ask parents for their input on the effectiveness of communication strategies.
- **Adjust Plan as Needed:** Be flexible and adapt your approach based on parent feedback and evolving needs. (Simon, B. S., 2004. *High School Outreach*, *The School Community Journal*.)

Peer-Reviewed References

- **Epstein, J. L. (2018).** School, family, and community partnerships: Preparing educators and improving schools. Routledge. (Provides a comprehensive framework for parent engagement)
- **Ferlazzo, L. (2011).** Engaging parents in school: How to create a welcoming environment for all families. Scholastic. (Offers practical strategies for building relationships with diverse families)
- **Hoover-Dempsey, K. V., & Sandler, H. M. (1997).** Why do parents become involved in their children's education?. Review of educational research, 67(1), 3-42. (Explores the motivations behind parent involvement)
- **Mapp, K. L. (2003).** Having their say: Parents describe why and how they are engaged in their children's learning. The School Community Journal, 13(1), 35-64. (Highlights the importance of understanding parent perspectives)
- **Simon, B. S. (2004).** High school outreach and family engagement: A study of practices in five cities. The School Community Journal, 14(1), 41-63. (Examines effective outreach strategies for engaging high school parents)